

AFFIDAVIT

I, John Robert Thomas, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I am a Special Agent with United States Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and have been so employed since August 2020. I am an investigator or law enforcement officer of the United States within the meaning of Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 41(a)(2)(C), that is, a federal agent empowered to conduct investigations and engaged in enforcing the federal criminal statutes. I am currently assigned to work on the Hampton Roads Human Trafficking Task Force within the Norfolk, Virginia Division of HSI. My experience includes the investigation of cases involving human trafficking and the use of facilities of interstate and foreign commerce in furtherance of such crimes. As part of my employment as a Special Agent, I have successfully completed the Criminal Investigator Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and the Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Training (HSISAT) in Glynco, Georgia. I have received training in the investigation of criminal violations of federal law within the jurisdiction of HSI, and I have received specialized training in the investigation of human trafficking and child exploitation. Additionally, I have received specialized training and gained specific experience in arrest procedures, the execution of search and seizure warrants, and various other criminal laws and procedures. Prior to this appointment, I served as a Police Officer with the City of Norfolk, Virginia for over twelve years.

2. The facts in this affidavit come from my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from other agents and witnesses. Because this affidavit is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause in support of the application for

an arrest warrant, this affidavit does not set forth each and every fact learned by me or observed by me during the course of this investigation. This affidavit includes only the facts I believe are necessary to establish probable cause to believe that YANG GAO, YE WANG, and SI LIU have committed violations of Conspiracy, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371, and Interstate and Foreign Travel or Transportation in Aid of Racketeering Enterprise, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1952(a)(3)(A) and 2.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

3. Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, prohibits two or more persons from conspiring to commit any offense against the United States, or to defraud the United States, or any agency thereof in any manner or for any purpose, and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy.

4. Title 18, United States Code, Section 1952(a)(3)(A), prohibits a person from traveling in interstate or foreign commerce or using the mail or any facility in interstate or foreign commerce with the intent to otherwise promote, manage, establish, carry on, or facilitate the promotion, management, establishment, or carrying on, of any unlawful activity.

5. Title 18, United State Code, Section 2 prohibits a person from willfully causing an act to be done which if directly performed by him or another would be an offense against the United States, is punishable as a principal.

PROBABLE CAUSE

Initial Investigation

6. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Norfolk, the Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD), and the Virginia State Police (VSP) through the HSI Norfolk-led Hampton Roads Human Trafficking Task Force (HRHT-TF) are investigating an organization that

operates a network of illicit massage businesses utilized to facilitate commercial sex of Chinese women as well as money laundering in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia and throughout the United States. This criminal organization utilizes skipthegames.com to advertise and facilitate commercial sex; along with a network of co-conspirator phone operators, money collectors, and violent enforcers. Skipthegames.com is known to law enforcement as a website utilized to advertise and promote commercial sex.

7. Agents have identified YANG GAO, YE WANG, and SI LIU as members of the organization and criminal conspiracy. The purpose of the conspiracy was to obtain money for and preserve the financial resources of the members of the conspiracy through the online advertisement, promotion, and facilitation of commercial sex in the Hampton Roads region. During and in furtherance of this conspiracy and to effect the object of the conspiracy, members of the conspiracy would and did play different roles. YANG GAO managed the day-to-day operations of the parlors, including collecting money obtained via commercial sex. YANG GAO also provided transportation to women engaged in commercial sex and maintained the facilities, unlicensed massage parlors, utilized for commercial sex. YE WANG assisted GAO in the operation of the illicit commercial sex business, including transporting women engaged in commercial sex, bringing supplies and maintaining the massage parlors, and facilitating payments to women engaged in commercial sex. Both GAO and WANG engaged in violence during the course of the conspiracy. SI LIU helped facilitate the exploitation of women engaged in commercial sex, collected proceeds from the illegal activity, managed the web-based advertising of the illicit massage parlors, and encouraged women to perform sex acts by providing condoms and offering financial incentives.

8. Based on the initial investigation, Surveillance activities were initiated on GAO, LIU, and WANG as well as target locations and vehicles. Through electronic and physical surveillance, as well as undercover operations and phone toll analysis, agents identified multiple spa locations being used by the trafficking organization, along with target phones, and vehicles. The initial spa locations identified were: [REDACTED], Virginia Beach (hereafter the “Princess Anne Road Spa”); [REDACTED], Virginia Beach (hereafter the “Euclid Road Spa”); and [REDACTED], Virginia Beach (hereafter the “Shell Road Spa”). As the investigation progressed, agents subsequently located two additional illicit spa locations, [REDACTED], Williamsburg (hereafter the “Jamestown Road Spa”); and [REDACTED], Virginia Beach (hereafter the “Southgate Ave Spa”). The unlicensed “business” names associated to these spa locations sometimes varied and changed throughout the investigation.

9. In January 2022, VBPD VICE unit received information from a crime solvers tip. The tip detailed information about the Shell Road Spa operating as a possible brothel advertising as a massage business. Through investigative means, detectives from VICE were able to locate associated advertisements on escort sites in Virginia Beach. On January 5, 2022, VBPD detectives conducted an undercover operation and identified a victim (hereafter [REDACTED]). [REDACTED] was cooperative and provided an overview of the inner workings of the overall trafficking organization which she described as expansive and being run from China and New York; distributing females throughout the United States. [REDACTED] indicated that she had been working for the organization and provided general details regarding how the operation functions using a network of working girls, bosses, phone operators and specific associated phone numbers, enforcers and money couriers.

Undercover Operations

10. On January 13, 2022, VBPD VICE initiated an undercover operation targeting the Shell Road Spa. Detectives previously identified an online advertisement posted on skipthegames.com which listed a contact phone number of (757) 712-9817, this advertisement and phone number was suspected of being associated to the Shell Road Spa, which was later confirmed through this undercover operation. The skipthegames.com advertisement displays images of scantily clothed Asian females in provocative positions; and highlights services including, but not limited to; “Deep throat,” “Face sitting,” “Oral – without condom (BBBJ).” Detectives observed that this ad was posted on multiple occasions on skipthegames.com including, but not limited to; both January 11, 2022 at 11:56 AM; and January 13, 2022 at 9:38 AM. On January 13, 2022, at approximately 8:40 PM, while working in an undercover capacity, a detective entered the Shell Road Spa. Once inside, the detective encountered an Asian female, approximately 40 years old, who walked to a room on the right side of the business and made an agreement for a half hour massage for \$50.00. The detective handed the female a fifty-dollar bill. She then told the detective to get undressed and get onto the table in the center of the room and placed a towel over his back. The female came back into the room within a few minutes and removed the towel and began to massage his neck, back and buttocks area. After about 15 minutes she informed the detective to flip over and then pointed to the detective’s groin area and asked if the detective wanted her to touch it. The detective asked her how much to use her mouth (pointed to his mouth) and she stated \$100 without hesitation. She told the detective to get the money first, and the detective handed her two \$50 bills and she exited the room again. When she entered back into the room she placed a condom in between the detective’s legs and then put

some lotion on her hands. After putting the lotion on her hands she reached for the detective's groin area at which time the detective stopped her and asked her if he could use the bathroom.

11. She walked the detective to the back left part of the business where the bathroom was located. Upon exiting the bathroom the detective returned to the room where she was waiting, and informed her that he had an emergency and had to leave. The detective asked if he could come back later and she agreed. As the detective was getting dressed she told him this will only take five minutes and pointed back to the table. The detective reiterated that he had to leave and walked out of the business.

12. On February 4, 2022, VBPD VICE initiated an undercover operation targeting the Euclid Road Spa. Detectives previously identified an online advertisement posted on skipthegames.com which listed a contact phone number of (757) 515-6469, this advertisement and phone number was suspected of being associated to the Euclid Road Spa, which was later confirmed through this operation. The skipthegames.com advertisement displays images of scantily clothed Asian females in provocative positions; and highlights services including, but not limited to; "Deep throat," "Face sitting," "Oral – without condom (BBBJ)." Detectives observed that this ad was posted on multiple occasions on skipthegames.com including, but not limited to February 4, 2022, at 6:06 PM.

13. On February 4, 2022, a VBPD VICE detective went to the Euclid Road Spa to conduct an undercover operation at the massage parlor. The detective entered the parlor from the front door and came into a hallway leading to three massage rooms. Out of the furthest room to the right, the detective observed at least three Asian females, and was greeted by an older Asian female. She escorted the detective into a large massage room on the right and asked how long he wanted. The detective told her a short massage and she asked for \$40. The female motioned to

the bed in the room and then left the room for a few moments. The detective undressed and laid down onto the massage table, face down, and waited for her return. She returned to the room and began to massage the detective's back. Several times while massaging his back she touched the detective's testicles.

14. After a few minutes of massage, she whispered into the detective's ear and asked if the detective wanted more, and the detective responded affirmatively. The Asian female asked if the detective wanted a "blow job" and he stated yes and then inquired about the cost. She told the detective \$60 more dollars. The detective got up and retrieved \$60 from his pants and laid back down onto the table, this time face up.

15. The Asian female then committed the act of furtherance by grabbing the detective's penis and asking if he wanted a condom. The detective responded affirmatively, and she let go of his penis and started to walk away to get a condom. The Asian female then turned around and stated, "it's okay you clean no condom," and went to grab the detective's penis again.

16. At that time, the detective sat up and asked her to use the bathroom. She said okay, gave the detective a small towel, and pointed in the direction of the bathroom. The detective entered the bathroom for a few moments and then returned. The detective informed the Asian female that he needed to go because of an emergency. The detective asked if he could meet later, and she said okay and that she was here all the time. The detective got dressed and exited the parlor.

17. On March 8, 2022, a VBPD VICE detective went to the Princess Anne Road Spa to conduct an undercover operation. Detectives had previously identified this location as being suspected of involvement in the criminal organization being investigated pursuant to this case.

The detective was greeted by an Asian female; and made an arrangement with a second Asian female masseuse for a thirty-minute massage for \$40. Upon completion of the massage, the Asian female took the detective's hand and placed it on her buttocks. The detective inquired how much (signaling a hand job), and subsequently asked for sex or a blowjob for \$200; to which the Asian female responded that she only does massages because her boss was there. The Asian female then offered to perform a hand job for free, grabbed a bottle of oil and attempted to reach for the detective's groin, at which time he asked to use the bathroom. The detective subsequently informed the Asian female that he was late for work and departed the massage parlor. The Asian female refused to accept a tip and stated that she only does massages.

18. On April 12, 2022, a VBPD VICE detective went to the Jamestown Road Spa to conduct an undercover operation. Detectives had previously identified this location as being suspected of involvement in the criminal organization being investigated pursuant to this case. The detective was greeted by an Asian female; and made an arrangement with a second Asian female masseuse for a thirty-minute massage for \$50. An Asian female who was later identified as "██████" was wearing lingerie with her breasts almost completely exposed. The detective was led to a massage room and undressed. The Asian female began the massage on the detective's back and buttocks for approximately twenty minutes. The Asian female then tapped the detective's back and grabbed a pillow and had the detective flip over, exposing his genitalia. The detective then pointed to the Asian female's vagina and made a motion with his finger into his hand asking for sex. The Asian female then pointed at the detective's groin and then back to her vagina and the detective responded in the affirmative. The Asian female did not speak English, so she grabbed her phone and pulled up google translate. The detective inquired how much, and she informed the detective 150 yuan. The detective then asked \$150 U.S., and she responded

affirmatively. The detective then had Google translate ask her if she had a condom and she replied “yes.”

19. The detective asked her via google translate if the detective could use the restroom and she guided him to the bathroom. Once back in the room the detective informed her that he had to go pick my kid up and asked her if he could return later that day. She agreed that he could come back, noting that he would have to pay for the half hour again. The detective subsequently got dressed and exited the massage parlor.

20. On April 29, 2022, a VBPD VICE detective went to the Princess Anne Road Spa to conduct an undercover operation. Detectives had previously identified this location as being suspected of involvement in the criminal organization being investigated pursuant to this case. The detective was greeted by an Asian female, and they agreed to a thirty-minute massage for \$40. The detective was brought to a massage table where he undressed and laid down. The Asian female removed the towel which had been on the detective and began to touch his buttocks and reach for his groin area. She asked if the detective wanted more and he said “yes,” and at which time she told him to roll over.

21. After rolling over, the Asian female pointed to the detective’s genitals and made a moving hand motion and asked, “you want”. The detective said yes and asked how much that would cost. The Asian female indicated \$50. The detective then asked if she would use her mouth and pointed to his mouth, so she understood. She stated yes and said “\$150.” The detective agreed to that amount, and she asked for the money. The detective exchanged \$150, and she attempted the act of furtherance by reaching for the detective’s genitals while asking if he wanted a condom. The Asian female left the room briefly and returned with a “mouth condom”, which appeared to be a large piece of thin plastic wrap, as well as hand lotion. At that

time, the detective asked to use the restroom and she directed him to the bathroom. The detective entered the bathroom briefly and then used an excuse of having to return to work to leave the establishment. While walking out of the establishment, the detective asked the Asian female for her phone number to come back later. She provided a phone number of (347) 827-6168 and the detective asked if she provided full sex, to which she replied “no only blowjob.” The female then handed the detective most of his money back and told him to pay later. She returned \$170 of the \$190 provided to her and the detective exited the business.

22. Through physical surveillance, agents identified a 2013 Lexus suspected of involvement in this case. The 2013 Lexus had been observed on surveillance at the suspected illicit spa location located at [REDACTED], Virginia Beach. This is the same location provided to VBPD in the above referenced crime solvers tip. Through record checks, agents determined that the 2013 Lexus is registered to Yang GAO of [REDACTED], Norfolk, Virginia. Additional record checks identified SI LIU as GAO’s wife and associate.

23. Later in the investigation, detectives interviewed the owner and landlord of the Shell Road Spa, who explained that a female by the name of [REDACTED] had been renting the property. The landlord stated she provided an ID and signed leasing agreements which were notarized. Detectives displayed a picture of a New York State identification card for [REDACTED] and asked if this was the female he met with; he stated it was not. Detectives then displayed a picture of Si LIU, and the landlord confirmed that was the female he had met with. Detectives subsequently showed a picture of Yang GAO to the landlord, and he confirmed that was the female’s husband. The landlord stated that the female had been paying by check each month since October 2021; noting that he had spoken with both of them a couple times by phone but

always thought her name was [REDACTED]. The landlord provided a picture of the check she used for her first payment.

24. The investigative team installed a pole camera with a view of [REDACTED], Virginia Beach and surveillance commenced on that location. Additionally, Pen Register Trap and Trace devices were authorized via state orders on the two prepaid "operator" numbers, (757) 712-9817 and (757) 515-6469, identified through VBPD undercover operations as being posted in ads and utilized to schedule illicit massage appointments. An operator number is a phone number used by the organization to schedule and facilitate commercial sex appointments. A commercial sex customer can call the operator, who will direct the customer on where to go to engage in a commercial sex appointment. The two prepaid operator numbers noted above were identified by law enforcement through review of commercial sex advertisements posted on skipthegames.com.

25. During a January 26, 2022, surveillance operation, VBPD detectives observed Si LIU travel to the T-Mobile store located at [REDACTED], Virginia Beach. VBPD detectives observed that Si LIU entered the store and remained inside for approximately ten minutes. Agents subsequently issued a subpoena for transaction and video surveillance footage from that date and time period, the results of which later confirmed Si LIU appears to have made a payment towards two prepaid lines, one of which was the above-referenced operator number, (757) 712-9817.

Robberies and Sexual Assault of [REDACTED]

26. On January 24, 2022, VBPD VICE / HSI TFOs interviewed a second victim, (hereafter referred to as [REDACTED]) who had come to the police department voluntarily for a follow-

up interview, reference a prior assault and robbery complaint. ■■■ had previously been interviewed by VBPD robbery detectives on October 8, 2021. ■■■ provided detailed statements regarding two-armed robbery incidents which occurred during 2021 at hotels in Virginia Beach. ■■■ indicated that she had been involved in prostitution activities at these hotels; and indicated that she had been working for a different organization than is being investigated pursuant to this case. ■■■ detailed that she was raped during the first robbery incident. This incident initially went unreported; however, ■■■ stated that she believes it occurred between May and June of 2021. ■■■ outlined that, during the second robbery incident, which occurred on October 8, 2021; she was strangled until she lost consciousness and was repeatedly hit in the head with a firearm. Through a photograph, ■■■ identified Yang GAO as having been the individual who robbed and assaulted her with a gun during the second incident. VBPD robbery detectives had previously photographed ■■■'s injuries following the initial interview, while she was undergoing treatment at a local hospital. ■■■ indicated that she believes that the same two males robbed her during both above referenced incidents, noting that she was robbed of at least a hundred dollars or more during the second incident. ■■■ additionally indicated in a prior interview that she believes the appointments set up with the two male suspects may have been set up from ads posted on the website skipthegames.com. VBPD robbery detectives obtained hotel surveillance footage from the October 8, 2021, incident, which shows two Asian males entering ■■■'s room and running out into the parking lot several minutes later. ■■■'s cooperation is ongoing.

Investigation into Targets and Locations

27. During physical surveillance, agents observed and identified an associate of GAO's, later identified as Ye WANG, who is the second male suspect with GAO during both of the aforementioned robbery incidents.

28. Agents received a subpoena return for telephone number (804) 309-9499, a number associated to GAO. That number is presently subscribed to a third party and an address in Norfolk, Virginia. Agents issued a subsequent subpoena for any and all lines associated to the master account number, leading to the identification of multiple target phone lines. Agents also obtained Dominion Energy records for multiple suspects and target addresses.

29. According to Dominion Energy records, Yang GAO had two active accounts under his name; [REDACTED], Norfolk, VA 23502, which has been active since May 2017; as well as [REDACTED], Norfolk, VA 23505; which has been active since March 2021. Although no contact number was listed on the Brockwell Ave account, records confirmed that contact number (804) 309-9499 is listed on the Fort Worth Ave address account.

30. Regarding Ye WANG, Dominion Energy records indicated that he is presently listed as account holder for the residence located at [REDACTED] Virginia Beach, VA 23456. Record checks indicate that account has been active since January 2022; and listed a contact number of (917) 886-5690.

31. Regarding an inquiry of the Princess Anne Road Spa, Dominion Energy records list an account under the business name "Amy Massage LLC" which has been active since August 2018; with a contact phone number of (626) 223-6567, a number previously identified as

being listed on [REDACTED] T-Mobile account. The customer name associated with the “Amy Massage LLC” account is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (listed as owner), with an address of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY 11219. The account lists a contact phone number of (804) 309-9499; the same number previously associated to GAO.

32. State search warrants were subsequently signed, authorizing the geolocation of GAO’s cellular call number (804) 309-9499; as well as the two previously identified operator numbers (757) 515-6469, and (757) 712-9817.

33. Through undercover operations and analysis of prostitution / massage parlor ads obtained from the website skipthegames.com, agents identified two specific Internet Protocol (IP) addresses suspected of involvement in this case. Each of the IPs were respectively used to post the massage parlor ads previously outlined herein on skipthegames.com. Investigators identified that these ads each listed one of the two aforementioned “operator” contact telephone numbers, either (757) 515-6469 or (757) 712-9817, which investigators utilized to contact members of the organization to schedule illicit massage appointments. These appointments were vetted as prostitution dates through VBPD undercover operations. Subpoenas were issued to Cox and Verizon for account information on the respective IP addresses.

34. Verizon responded to one of the subpoenas and provided that target IP address 108.39.125.3 listed a customer name of Ye WANG with an address of [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456.

35. A state search warrant was subsequently signed, authorizing the geolocation of Ye WANG’s number, (917) 886-5690.

36. Cox Communications Inc. responded and outlined that target IP address 72.218.7.213 listed a customer name of Yang GAO with an address of [REDACTED] Norfolk, Virginia, 23502-4515. Records list a home phone number of (804) 309-9499; and business phone number of (347) 803-8164. Records further outlined that the target IP address 72.218.7.213 has been assigned and leased to the aforementioned account and address since August 10, 2020.

37. On March 25, 2022, GAO and WANG were observed on surveillance travelling to Williamsburg where they appeared to secure new office space to open a parlor at [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Williamsburg (the Jamestown Road Spa).

38. Agents identified that GAO and LIU own three properties, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Norfolk, Virginia, as well as [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Virginia Beach. WANG recently closed on the residence located at [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Virginia Beach. That property sold for approximately \$515,000 and records list a secondary owner as WANG's wife.

39. Federal Grand Jury subpoenas have been issued for multiple identified accounts of GAO, LIU, WANG, and others after initial review of records received show account activity indicative of money laundering. GAO and LIU hold multiple accounts jointly and individually at Navy Federal Credit Union and Bank of America. [REDACTED] maintains accounts at J.P. Morgan Chase Bank and Bank of America individually and jointly with his wife. The Bank of America accounts held by GAO and LIU jointly and [REDACTED] individual account (GAO BoA-0185 and [REDACTED] BoA-6730) are funnel accounts which are funded by seemingly random individuals, close relatives, owned accounts, and from each other in the form of checks, cashier's checks,

cash deposits and international wire transfers from individuals in the Peoples Republic of China. Those checks were from individuals whose names suggest are of Chinese ethnic descent and reside in the Flushing, New York. The funds were used to provide large down payments, pay full price cash offers or pay-off existing mortgages on homes in the Norfolk and Virginia Beach area. GAO and LIU used \$100,000 from a wire transfer from the Bank of China to pay-off [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Norfolk, Virginia. GAO and LIU also used their Navy Federal Credit Union account to funnel cash and payments from individuals in the Flushing, New York area to purchase the [REDACTED] condominium and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Virginia Beach.

The May 4, 2022, Enforcement Operation

40. On May 4, 2022, an enforcement operation was conducted in the Hampton Roads Area of Virginia. Virginia Beach Police Department, along with HSI agents and TFOs executed seven state search warrants at three residences and four illicit spas locations; along with state search warrants on target accounts at Bank of America and Navy Federal Credit Union. Virginia Beach Police Department initially took custody of all the evidence recovered from the each of the search locations.

41. Regarding the search of Ye WANG's residence located at [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Virginia Beach; officers of the Virginia Beach Police Department executed the search warrant and detained WANG and his wife. WANG and his wife exited the residence and were taken into custody without incident. At the time of his arrest, WANG was found to be in possession of the cellular telephone assigned call number (757) 371-1333. Agents noted that this is the number associated to the Jamestown Road Spa. Pursuant to a search of the residence, agents located, amongst other things; banking records, approximately \$32,000 in U.S. Currency, some of which

was wrapped and labeled with various dollar amounts and names or moniker believed to correspond to workers/victims at one or more of the spa locations, a computer, money counter, a large shipping box filled with condoms with GAO's name and address on an affixed shipping label, as well as multiple cellular telephones. Agents called the number associated to Ye WANG, (917) 886-5690, and observed the phone ringing within the master bedroom. Officers located another phone within the master bedroom closet, which agents called and observed ringing as well. That phone was assigned call number (757) 515-6469; a number being geolocated pursuant to a state search warrant, which was identified as one of the "operator" lines utilized during one or more undercover operations to set up an appointment for illicit massage. Additionally, a 2019 Infinity QX6 was seized from WANG's residence.

42. Regarding the search of GAO and LIU's residence, located at [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Norfolk, Virginia; officers of the Virginia Beach Police Department arrested GAO and Si LIU upon exiting the residence and departing in a vehicle. Officers also detained LIU's mother and located the couple's juvenile son, who was also inside the vehicle at the time of their arrest. GAO was found to be in possession of the cellular telephone assigned call number (804) 309-9499. Pursuant to a search of the residence, agents located, amongst other things; financial documents, leasing agreements for the illicit spa locations, approximately \$57,000 in U.S. Currency, some of which was wrapped and labeled with various dollar amounts and at least one name or moniker which corresponded to a worker / victim at the spa locations; clothing matching the description of the shirt worn by GAO during one of the alleged robbery incidents; a money counter, and multiple cellular telephones. Another phone, assigned call number (757) 712-9817; a number being geolocated pursuant to a state search warrant, which was identified as one of the "operator" lines utilized during one or more undercover operations to set up an appointment for

illicit massage, was also located within the house. Three vehicles were seized from GAO's residence including: a 2019 Toyota Sienna; a 2013 Lexus RX; as well as a 2018 Subaru WRX STI.

44. A search of GAO's second residence, located at [REDACTED], Virginia Beach, which he recently purchased; revealed that the home was being renovated and largely empty. Pursuant to the searches of the illicit massage parlors, located at [REDACTED], Williamsburg; [REDACTED], Virginia Beach; [REDACTED], Virginia Beach; and [REDACTED], Virginia Beach; agents located, amongst other things, multiple cellular telephones, documents, condoms, and other items indicative of commercial sex at the various locations. Further, agents located Chinese National witnesses at each of the aforementioned spa locations. A total of nine witnesses were detained and later interviewed by VBPD detectives, as well as HSI agents and TFOs; each providing a statement of varying degrees of investigative significance to investigators. Three of these witnesses requested assistance and were subsequently placed in a HRHT-TF shelter.

45. One of the more substantive statements provided by a witness, was provided by a cooperating witness recovered from the [REDACTED] location. The witness provided a post-*Miranda* statement outlining that she had been living at that location for almost one month, after answering an online help wanted ad for masseuses. The witness was initially displayed photos of GAO and WANG and shook her hands indicating that she denied knowing these individuals and requested an in-person interpreter, which was provided. The witness stated that she responded to an online advertisement for a masseuse and travelled from New York to Virginia Beach by bus. She further stated that she was picked up by a taxi which brought her to the spa location. The

witness indicated that the taxi ride was coordinated by the “boss,” who she described as male. Upon arrival, the witness described that a female who typically accompanied the boss explained to her that, in addition to massages, she could provide sexual favors, to earn additional compensation. The witness was displayed a photo of Si LIU and she indicated that this looked like the same person that she had been describing as the female with the boss, but she could not be completely sure; noting that the female typically wore a mask. The female accompanying the boss additionally provided condoms while meeting with the witness after she arrived at the massage parlor. The witness later admitted to providing hand jobs and oral sex to some of the customers. The witness further indicated that the appointments and various services were accounted for via a text ledger on WeChat; and that the proceeds were split; with approximately sixty percent going to the bosses, and forty percent to the victim. WeChat is a Chinese instant messaging, social media, and mobile payment app and is the world’s largest state alone mobile app with over one billion monthly active users. WeChat provides text messaging, hold-to-talk voice messaging, broadcast (one-to-many) messaging, video conferencing, video games, sharing of photographs and videos and location sharing. The witness also identified that the male boss was the person who would usually come to the parlor to provide food and water, while the female boss would collect money. Based on the facts of this case, I believe that the male “boss” and female described by the witness in the above paragraph were Yang GAO and Si LIU, respectively.

Target Interviews

46. GAO, WANG, and LIU were transported to the Virginia Beach Detective Bureau where they were interviewed. During a post-*Miranda* interview, GAO admitted, amongst other things, to working for two individuals who own the massage parlors being investigated under this case. He admitted to performing various duties at the parlors, collecting money from the females working at the parlors (which he stated was kept at his personal residence), and giving the female workers rides in his vehicle. GAO further advised that his wife, LIU, was responsible for setting appointments and managing the posting of advertisements for various spa locations on skipthegames.com. He noted that she would perform this duty from home and was paid a commission. GAO further advised that he worked performing construction and installing flooring at various massage parlors and noted that he typically earned approximately \$5,000 to \$6,000 per month. GAO indicated that he fully paid off the mortgage on his primary residence located at [REDACTED], Norfolk; and advised that he had borrowed a large sum of cash recently put down on the residence located at [REDACTED], Virginia Beach, from friends and family. Regarding the October 8, 2021, assault and robbery incident, GAO admitted to going to the victim's hotel room and assaulting her via pushing her. GAO initially identified himself as being the person displayed in a still photograph taken from hotel video surveillance footage at the time of the incident. GAO indicated that he and WANG arrived at the hotel room and got into a dispute with the victim. GAO indicated that the victim began screaming and hit him, at which time he pushed her. GAO stated that he had brought a fake gun to the hotel; however, he indicated that he left the fake gun inside the vehicle and did not bring it into the hotel.

47. During a post-*Miranda* interview, WANG admitted to performing various duties at various illicit spa locations identified through this investigation, such as bringing supplies to the parlors. Regarding the October 8, 2021, assault and robbery incident, WANG admitted that

GAO had called a contact phone number and set up an appointment for prostitution services with the victim. WANG stated that he traveled to the hotel and he and GAO entered the room. WANG indicated that after he paid the victim, there was a dispute over money. WANG took back cash he had given her, at which point the victim began screaming and hitting WANG and GAO. WANG further admitted to being the person in the security camera footage seen arriving at, and later running from, the victim's hotel room.

48. During a post-*Miranda* interview, LIU denied involvement or knowledge of criminal activity and, after a brief period of questioning, requested to speak with an attorney.

49. Following the interviews, GAO, WANG, and LIU were transported to the Virginia Beach Jail and were charged with multiple violations of the Commonwealth of Virginia criminal code.

CONCLUSION

50. Based on the forgoing facts, along with my training and experience, I believe there is sufficient probable cause to believe that between in or about October 2021 and continuing until in or about May 2022, YANG GAO, YE WANG, and SI LIU have committed violations of Conspiracy, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371, and Interstate and Foreign Travel or Transportation in Aid of Racketeering Enterprise, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1952(a)(3)(A) and 2.

Respectfully submitted,

John Robert Thomas
Special Agent

Homeland Security Investigations

Read and Approved:

Megan M. Montoya
Assistant U.S. Attorney

Subscribed and sworn to before me
On this 14th day of July 2022.

The Honorable Lawrence R. Leonard
United States Magistrate Judge